

September 4, 2003

**AVAILABILITY OF MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SUPPLY PRODUCTS
FOR SPINAL CORD INJURY PATIENTS**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides guidance regarding the availability of medical and surgical supply products for spinal cord injury patients at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care facilities. **NOTE:** *VHA Directive 98-021 is rescinded.*

2. BACKGROUND

a. In May 1997, VA implemented a VA national formulary (VANF) that contains a section dedicated to outpatient medical and surgical supply products.

b. The medical and surgical supply products listed on the VANF are intended to provide each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and local facility, direction in the selection of the formulary items that must be made available at all facilities for the care of veterans. The medical and surgical supply section of VANF is a generic listing of the broad range of products that must be made available.

c. The medical and surgical supply section of VANF is not intended to be exclusionary or to preclude a patient from receiving a particular product deemed medically necessary by the provider. It is recognized that, for some of these products, patient-specific needs require the use of a particular brand of product for which a normally interchangeable alternative may not be medically acceptable. It is acknowledged that a number of patients have used a particular medical and surgical supply product for years, and it is anticipated that availability of those products are necessary for some patients.

d. VISN formularies and practices are expected to include the medical surgical supply product specificity necessary to achieve the intent of this Directive.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that the unique medical and surgical supply needs of spinal cord injury patients must be addressed within the parameters of VANF and the VISN formulary processes.

4. ACTION

a. The VISN formulary committees and local facilities must ensure that spinal cord injury patient medical and surgical supply product needs within their VISNs are addressed via their VISN formularies to ensure the availability of products.

b. The VISN non-formulary process is to be used to address unique patient needs.

c. Clinicians need to educate patients about the availability of standardized products.

NOTE: *Before any change in medical or surgical supply product is made, both prescriber and patient acceptance issues must be addressed.*

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES JULY 31, 2006

VHA DIRECTIVE 2003-049

September 4, 2003

5. REFERENCES: VHA Directive 2001-044 VA National Formulary Process, July 24, 2001.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: Chief Consultant for Spinal Cord Injury (11S), Chief Logistics Office (10F) and Pharmacy Benefits Management (119) are responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to 202-273-8472.

7. RESCISSIONS: VHA Directive 98-021, Availability of Medical and Surgical Supply Products for Spinal Cord Injury Patients, dated March 31, 1998, is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires July 31, 2006.

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